A SERMON

Preached before

His Majesty

AT

WHITEHALL

March 9th. 1661.

BY

The Right Reverend Father in God *B.* Lord Bishop of *Peterborough.*

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1 Pet. II. XXV.

For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your Souls.

THE condition of those in the Text, both for what they had been once, and for what they now were, that is, for their straying and returning again, looks so like our case of late, (who, if ever any, had err'd and stray'd from all the wayes of duty both to God and man, but are now happily returned to the Shepherds and Bishops of our Souls) you may perhaps imagine this Text to be chosen of purpose to pursue those two *Blown Arguments*.

And therefore before I proceed farther, it will be neceſſary to deliver you from thoſe thoughts, and perhaps that fear, For though the miſchiefs in the one, & Bleſſings in the other be ſuch, as deſerve never to be forgotten; yet poſſibly may not indure a perpetual importunate Remembrancer.

And the truth is, the very words and phraſe of the text, which onely at the firſt bluſh carries us upon thoſe thoughts, will leave us, if we look a little nearer to them. For the Straying here will prove to be of another kind, and the Return will be found to be to another Biſhop. The ſtraying here was of ſuch as had err'd like Sheep, whereas ours had little or nothing of the Sheep in it, ſave the Sheeps clothing; for dreſſ'd up they were with pretenſes as ſoft as wool, Gods glory, Purity of worſhip, Chriſtian liberty, nothing worſe then theſe, and ſo indeed they err'd like Sheep, as if they had been ſuch; but the truth is, it was liker the ranging of Wolves, tearing and devouring, then the ſtraying of weak and

and ſilly Sheep. And for the returning likewiſe here, though it was to a *Biſhop*, yet I dare not be ſo bold with him that bears that name in the text, directly to apply it to our *Biſhops*, nor advance our return to this.

The Biſhop here was no doubt our bleſſed Lord and Saviour, whom God himſelf had conſecrated and ordained to that office; but our Biſhops are not otherwiſe concerned here then as they can make their title from and under him; but if that may be done hereafter, I truſt you will not be againſt it. In the mean time, if there were no more in it, me thinks this ſhould be enough to reconcile the *Presbyterians* to the name of a *Biſhop*, which our *S*aviour himſelf hath vouchſafed to take upon him. But having laid aſide that argument, which the words at firſt ſight ſeem'd to offer, I beſpeak your attention to one of a more common intereſt, which concerns all that would be Chriſtians, whoſe character it is. Who from the wayes of ſin and error, are return'd to the faith and obe-

obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, who to reduce us from those wayes hath taken upon him to be our Shepherd and Bishop.

The main point is, that God of his mercy complying with the necessities & infirmities of nature, hath erected an office of trust and confidence in his Church, under the quality of a Shepherd and Bishop; to direct and guide us, who otherwise would erre and stray like sheep, and so be lost for ever. The particulars incident to this are, first The necessity of it, impli'd in our natural condition, who like Sheep are of themselves apt to erre and go astray. 2. The accommodation we have for it. For what should they do which are out of the way, but return? and to whom should Sheep return but to a Shepherd? and lost Sheep, but to him that came *to seek and save that which was lost*? and where should they finde so safe and sure a retreat, as in him who purchas'd them with his own blood? All these are accomplished in our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, whom we

we shall consider, first in his office of Shepherd or *Bishop*; then in his Flock or Dioceſs; the Souls of men. *We are returned*, &c.

I. THe first thing we meet with in the text, is our natural condition. That we were as Sheep that had gone astray. And the confession of this is the first thing we meet with in our Liturgy. *We have erred and stray'd like lost Sheep.* And though it were fit and necessary it should be there, for, sure I am, we never err'd worse then since we laid that by; yet here we look upon it in another relation and use; it is the first stone to be laid in this building, in the erection of the office of a Shepherd and Bishop. The infirmities of the Sheep are the ground of the necessity of a Shepherd.

But now that while we are speaking of our errors, we do not commit one, we must know, first what kind of erring this is, and then how we fell into the fatal necessity of it. What it is, the Bishop that must lead us out of it, will tell

tell us; for he is the *Biſhop* of our ſouls: and therefore our Straying here muſt be that of the Soul. For though our natural infirmities do expoſe us to error in many things elſe, yea almoſt in all other things, even thoſe that are within the reach of ſenſe and reaſon: there is not any thing in Nature, in Art, in Philoſophy, though commonly received for truth, which of late time is not charged with error, and it may be ſometimes not without cauſe; yet without any great regard here, if the Soul be not concern'd.

Now if we be ſo liable to error in the things of this life, where both the end and the way to them are within the compaſſe of the eye, in which we erre, as it were, in our own Country, where we are bred and born; we muſt certainly loſe our way, where we are ſtrangers, being Citizens of another Country, as thoſe bleſſed Saints, who beſt knew the wayes of the ſoul, confeſſed, that they were *ſtrangers and pilgrims* here. *Heb.* 11. 14. And they which ſay ſo,

so, shew plainly that they seek a Country, and that a better, that is, a heavenly, where God hath prepared for them a City. They must needs be disappointed that seek for Heaven upon earth, where there is nothing fitted and proportion'd to the Soul, either for the nature or the desires of it. The Soul is immortal, and cannot be provided for, where all things are liable to change and mortality; for when it shall survive them, it will be at a losse, till it find a Country like itself, that is everlasting and immortal.

And as the nature, so the desires of the Soul are unsatisfied here; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, nor the understanding with knowledge, nor the heart with the best and choisest delights of it. We are soon wearied and tir'd with what we have, and are as thirsty of that we have not. In our plenty as craving, as others in their greatest wants. The goods of this world are Hydropick all, *quo plus bibuntur plus sitiuntur.* They that have the

greateſt ſhare and portion in them, of Wealth, of Honour, of Power, do not ſleep the better, nor are their bodies leſs comber'd with diſeaſes, nor their minds freer from vexations and troubles. And therfore as the Saints I nam'd before, did by what they willingly ſuffer'd here, ſhew plainly that they ſought another Country; ſo by this is ſhewn as plainly, that they had cauſe to do ſo.

Now here lyes the fatal neceſſity of erring, they ſeek a Country and City that is invisible and unknown to nature, either what the ſtate of that Country is, or by what laws the Citizens therof are to be governed. And when we walk in the dark it is not ſtrange we ſhould loſe our way.

A chief part of that way lyes, firſt in the knowledge & worſhip of that God, who had prepar'd for them a City, by what Sacrifices, Rites & Ceremonies he will be ſerv'd. How much of that may be had by nature, we learn by thoſe, who were moſt likely to know, but did not, who were the maſters of know-

ledge

ledge to most other Nations, for of such S. *Paul* speaks *Rom.* 1. Who when they professʼd themselves to be wise, as well they might in many other things, yet in this of Gods worship, they became fools. For they *turned the glory of the uncorruptible God, into the similitude and image of corruptible Man, and of birds, and fourfooted beasts, and of creeping things.* Rom. 1. Rom. 1. 23.

The right way of worshipping God (since reveal'd to us to be by Jesus Christ) was not only unknown to them, but to those to whom God had more peculiarly imparted himself. *The mysterie of Christ Ephes.* 3. 5. *in other ages was not made known to the Sons of men, untill he was reveal'd unto his holy Apostles and Prophets by his Spirit.* Yea it was unknown to the very Angels, who when it was first reveal'd, in a kind of admiration and curiosity ἐπιθυμοῦσιν παρακύψαι, *desir'd to look*, the word signifies *earnestly to pry into.* And that which the Angels of Heaven did not know, certainly the sons of men could not. Ephes. 3. 5. 1 Pet. 1. 12.

The other part of the way to that heavenly Country in which we may naturally ſeem to have ſome ſkill, the way of vertue, that is, in the ſtile of Scripture, to *live godly, righteouſly and ſoberly in this preſent world*, appeared to the very Heathen to be the only way to happineſs. Yet theſe natural impreſſions were ſo dim and imperfect, both through Original corruption, and the over-ruling power of paſſion and luſt, that of thoſe things they knew, they held the truth in unrighteouſneſs, even to the very perverting of the courſe of nature as the Apoſtle obſerves of them in the ſame place, *Rom. 1.*

Tit. 2. 12.

Rom. 1.

Beſides, many vertues they knew not, which are the glory of Chriſtianity, as Humility, Denying ourſelves, Taking up the Croſs, Forgiving and Loving our enemies, in their eyes looked more like follies then vertues, and ſo they would have done in ours too, if we had had no better guide then ourſelves to lead us.

By this we may ſee the neceſſity we have

have of Leading; let us now see the accommodation we have for it in the Leader. Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, a person every way fitted for the purpose, both for his skill, and good will; He knew best the Heavenly Country, whither we are going, and the way to it; for he came from thence, from the bosom of his Father And for his good will to his own, we cannot doubt, they are the *Sheep* which he had purchased with his blood, and by that had a just title to govern in what Lordly way of Secular domination he pleased; yet chose that easie gentle way as *Shepherds* use to lead their *Sheep* And such he professed himself to be. *I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the Sheep*, and He made it good in every point while he was upon earth; He went about doing good, preaching the Gospel, healing the diseases of the *Sheep*, forgiving their sins, till he came to the last and hardest work of a good *Shepherd*, He laid down his life for his *Sheep*. John 10. 11.

Yet his Paſtoral care died not with him. As he was a Prieſt for ever; ſo he was a Shepherd for ever; for after he had in perſon aſcended into Heaven, he took care for his flock that he left behind Him, that they might not be as Sheep without a Shepherd. And from thence

Epheſ. 4. *gave gifts unto men, ſome Apoſtles, ſome Prophets, ſome Paſtors and Teachers, &c.* to continue ſtill his Paſtoral charge upon earth: and they were the ſame perſons which before he went he had deſigned for it, and for the ſame reaſon that the Father ſent Him, *to ſeek and*

Mat. 15. 24. *ſave the Sheep that were loſt*; as appears in the preamble to the commiſſion given

Mat. 9. 36. to the Apoſtles. Mat. 9. 36. *When he ſaw the multitude he had compaſſion on them, becauſe they were diſperſed and ſcattered abroad like Sheep having no Shepherd.* This commiſſion indeed was only to the loſt Sheep of the houſe of *Iſrael* while he was alive; but when he roſe again from the dead, He renewed and inlarged it to the

Mat. 28. 19. loſt Sheep of all the world. *Go and teach all Nations.*

And

And as he assigned the persons, *sicut misit me Pater. As the Father sent me so send I you.* He instituted likewise the office it self in all the points and parts of it. John 20. 21.

1. *Go and teach all Nations, baptizing, &c.* there he gave the power of preaching and baptizing. Mat. 28. 19.

2. He commands a perpetual memorial of his death, in the Sacrament of his blessed body and blood. *Hoc facite, &c.* 1 Cor. 11. 24.

3. He gave them at the same time the power of the Keys, *Whose sins ye remit they are remitted, &c.* John 20. 23.

4. And before that in case of contumacy he gave power to excommunicate offenders, *If he will not hear the Church, let him be as a heathen and publican.* Mat. 18. 17.

5. He ordered them how and what to pray. *When ye pray say, &c.* Mat. 6. 9.

6. He gave them power and jurisdiction over false Shepherds, to expel them from the flock. *Beware of false Prophets which come to you in Sheeps cloathing, but inwardly are ravening Wolves.* Mat. 7. 19.

These and the like are the parts of the Shepherds office. And

III. And to all these in the third place he gave besides a divine vertue and efficacy to work supernatural effects upon the Soul. Not only the institution, but the power also is from him. And therefore by St. *Paul* he is called the *great Shepherd*, and by St. *Peter* ἀρχιποίμην *the chief Shepherd* The cure of Souls was originally in him, ἀρχιτεκτονικῶς, but διακονικῶς ministerially and derivatively in the Shepherds under him.

1 Pet. 5. 4.

IV. And fourthly, that their leading might be taken and acknowledged for his, He appointed that all should be done in His name. That they should Preach in His name, Pray in his name, Assemble together in his name, Cast out Devils in his name. And accordingly St. *Paul*, when he judg'd the incestuous *Corinthian* to be delivered unto Satan, 1 *Cor.* 5. 4. he did it *in the name and power of Christ.* And when 2 *Cor.* 5. 10. he absolved him, it was in *persona Christi.* All was His.

To the Apostles it may be all this was allowed, but not therefore to all other Shep-

Shepherds after. Yes, to all that can rightly claim from Him. His promiſe was to be with them to the end of the world, that is, longer then any Apoſtle could live. I am ſure the neceſſities of the Sheep will be the ſame for ever; for Sheep we ſhall be ſtill whereſoever we are. When God diſtributed to the Church the ſeveral parts of the Paſtoral charge, *ſome Apoſtles, ſome Prophets, ſome Paſtors and Teachers*, he adds, that it was *ad conſummationem Sanctorum, & ædificationem corporis Chriſti*, that is, ſo long as there ſhould be Saints to be perfected, and ſo long as Chriſt ſhould have a Church, a body upon earth, and that is ſo long as there ſhould be Sheep Chriſt had provided there ſhould be Shepherds. And theſe he hath taken to that nearneſs and conjunction, that the obedience or contempt done to them, he takes it as done to himſelf. *Qui vos audit me audit, &c.*

Mat. 28. 20.

Ephes. 4.

The benefits and advantages we have by this are many; firſt, it is an honour and incouragement to the Shepherds,

that the work they do is Christs, who will bear them out in what they do according to their duty, and reward them for what they suffer for it.

2. It removes all discouragement from the Sheep, that make a stand at the infirmities and frailties of their Shepherds, that they look through and beyond all them at the power of Christ under whom they serve.

3. Another great benefit it is, that in all doubtful and difficult cases we may secure our selves upon the conduct of Christ in his Ministers. For if possibly men should be misled by them into error, when in simplicity of heart, not knowing any thing to the contrary, they shall submit to them; I dare promise them at least a favourable hearing from him that commanded the obedience.

But I dare not, nor can say that for all Shepherds; for every congregational herd hath their Shepherd too; but such as have no part in that power, which is derived from Christ and his mission; that gave it immediately to the Apostles only.

only. *Sicut miſit me Pater, ſic &c.* And all others that have it muſt receive it from them, or from ſuch as derive it from them by ſucceſſion. It is but reaſon that Chriſt ſhould have the choice of his own Miniſters. The Sheep that belong to thoſe other Shepherds, can plead nothing for their obedience to them. St. *Pauls obedite præpoſitis*, belongs not to them, they obey not thoſe that are ſet over them, but either thoſe that ſet themſelves over the flock, or the flock themſelves ſet them, and that not of neceſſity, which ſome vainly plead for them; but as neceſſary, profeſſing there is no lawful calling for a Miniſter, *quem non miſit populus*, where the Shepherd is not choſen by the Sheep. If theſe fall into an error by the miſguidance of their Shepherds, they are in a ſad and worſe condition, which admits no plea of excuſe or extenuation from the Shepherd. They muſt bear their own faults, and the miſguiding of the Shepherds, which they make their own by chooſing them. In a word, the favour that Chriſt doth

John 20.

Heb. 13. 17.

is to his own, not the peoples Shepherds.

II. THe next thing that falls into our consideration is our Duty. To return to Christ the Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls. And that is to submit our selves to be led and guided by him. To turn to Christ is in effect to turn Christian. We are no less concerned here. And that must be in two respects: in his office of *Shepherd* and *Bishop*, and in the execution of it by *Shepherds* and *Bishops*.

I. For first, we can not be said to return to him as a *Shepherd*, if we refuse him in any part of his office. *The good Sheep* saith our *Saviour* *John* 10. 27. *hear the voice of the Shepherd and they follow him.* If they turn their ears only to him, and hear him, and not follow him, they turn short, for follow him they must through all the parts of his office. 'Tis so with us, who for the most part like nothing in the *Shepherd* but his pipe, and a pleasant tune. His rod and his staffe we can

John 10.27.

spare.

spare. The Prophet *Ezekiel* describes us right, *chap.* 33. an old humour it seems it was. *They come unto thee, and sit before thee as my people to hear my words, v.* 31. Ezek. 33.31. just as we do here come and sit us down as the Lords people to hear his word. But what follows in the next verse? *And loe thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an Instrument; for they hear thy words, but do them not.* Verse 32.

And what will come of this at the last, our Saviour tells us in the Parable, where some had the boldness to plead for their entrance, that they had *eat and drunk in his presence*, and had *heard him in their streets*. Luke 13. 26. *Citizens* it seems they were by the *streets*, and by their *devotions*, a *Sermon and a Dinner*, they eat with him, and they heard him. But what came of it? by hearing him 'tis like they knew him well; for all that, he tells them plainly, He knew not them. If the Sheep wanted nothing but knowledge, I should pardon them if they desired nothing of the Shepherd but a Sermon. But this is not

not that which I principally intended here.

II. *But* ſecondly, That our turning to Chriſt be in the full execution of his office, as in perſon, ſo by commiſſion. Princes, as well they may, think themſelves contemned in their Embaſſadors & Miniſters. And ſo doth our *Saviour* for his *Shepherds*, who are his Miniſters and Embaſſadors too. *Qui vos ſpernit me ſpernit.*

I ſhall not incloſe this power or favour to *Biſhops* only, becauſe I finde that name in the text; but lay it in common to all ſuch to whom Chriſt hath committed under him the government of the Church and the cure of *Souls*; ſo as *Presbyterians* may have a ſhare here, when they can prove their Ordination and Miſſion.

This part of our duty to obey Chriſt in his Miniſters is with many of very hard digeſtion, who not regarding the neceſſity there is of it, nor the benefit we have by it, nor the authority and commiſſion we have for it, nor the gentle conduct

we

we have in it, lay it aſide as a thing of no uſe, and that God hath provided other means to lead us many and more certain then any *Shepherds* can be. We have firſt our own *Reaſon* to lead us: 2. We have *Scripture* a ſurer guide then that. 3. We have the *Spirit* beſides, and that *will lead us into all truth.* Laſtly, we have our own *Conſciences*, which in the commiſſion of Leading is of the *Quorum*, nothing can be done without it. Joh. 16. 13.

We can not deny but that all theſe have a part and ſhare in the guiding of our ſouls. But as no one of them doth exclude or bar the other; ſo nor do all of them the *Shepherds*. For allowing to every of theſe that which is peculiar to them, there will be ſtill found ſomething to remain, which is proper for the *Shepherds* to do.

I am now, I confeſs, in a diſcourſe not ſo ſmooth and eaſie as beſt befits popular *Sermons*; yet becauſe many whom it concerns to weaken the hands and power of Church-governours, do with their importunate clamours fill the Pulpit, you will

will be pleaſed to allow of a ſhort Anſwer from thence too.

I. AND firſt for REASON; It is not to be denied, that it ought to be admitted even in matters of Religion, where it hath leaſt to do; for Religion is the object and imployment of Faith, and not of Reaſoning, & yet naturally no man will believe any thing unleſs he ſees Reaſon for it. But how? not a Reaſon of the thing that he beleives; for that works Knowledge, not Faith; but yet a reaſon of beleiving it, for the credit of the author that relates it; for nothing can be more unreaſonable, then not to beleive God that cannot lye. But to admit reaſon in matters of Faith for any other uſe then that, is to ſet up a Religion without Faith, which would be as ſtrange a thing as to have a Religion with nothing elſe.

There are in Religion ſome things to be known as well as believed, and to theſe Reaſon and Diſcourſe is proper; for though the Articles of Faith, and what-

whatsoever shall appear to be contained in Scripture are without all doubt and reasoning to be received, because God hath revealed them; yet that this or that Article or Proposition is contained in Scripture, is a thing to be known, and lyes within the compasse of sense, we may see whether it be there or no, that is, for the words. And for the meaning of those words we must understand the language in which they are written, the proper import and idiom of the phrase, the force and consequence of the discourse, the coherence and consent it hath with other points better known. We must besides discover the fallacies & inconsequences of those that would obtrude a different sense from that we receive. All these difficulties, though in matter of Religion, are within the conduct of Reason; but it is Reason so exalted with skill of Arts and Languages, with Prudence and Diligence, that we shall be forced to find work for the Shepherds too. The greatest part of Christs flock, I am sure, must perish if they

may not truſt others in thoſe things, to which their natural inabilities or courſe of life hath made them incapable. And for the beſt of the flock, whom both Nature and Art hath fitted to maſter the greateſt difficulties of themſelves; if they ſhall ſeriouſly conſider how much and how oft Prejudice, Education, Cuſtom, Paſſion and Intereſt doth corrupt our Reaſon, we would in prudence ſometimes ſuſpect our own, and ſeek better ſecurity from the Church; where though we ſhall not infallibly find the truth, we may alwayes ſafely preſume it. This will ſerve to reconcile our obedience with Reaſon.

II. THe next pretender againſt the Shepherds leading is the SCRIPTURE. I confeſſe the *Scripture* to be a ſurer guide then Reaſon, for the Authors ſake; and yet, by what ye heard even now, it works little without it, but yet ſurer for all that. The ignorance of Scripture is a cauſe of erring. Mat. 22. 29. *Ye erre*, ſaith our Saviour, *not knowing*

the Scriptures. And to keep us right in our way Gods *Word is a lantern to our feet, and a light unto our paths.* We cannot say too much of the excellency and benefit of it. It is a perfect record of all that concerns Heaven, or the way to it. It hath all the perfections that a law or rule can have to guide us; yet those perfections are confin'd within the limits and nature of a law, to do no more then is proper for a law to do, which is very little without a Judge to apply it. Though the rule be sufficiently straight and perfect, yet it measures nothing out of the hand of him that hath skill to use it. Bring what controversy you will to the lawes, they pronounce nothing either for the Plaintiff or Defendant. This is the true reason why, though all sects pretend to Scripture, there is yet no end of controversies, because there is no common Judge to end them. And the reason why every sect for all that seems to rest satisfied, they are guided by the Scripture, is because they carry their Judge along with them, themselves.

Psalm 119. 105.

So as if together with the *Scriptures* there be not a Shepherd too, or ſome as little to be truſted, our ſelves I mean, it cannot lead at all. It is indeed a *two-*
Heb. 4. 12. *edged ſword*, but cuts nothing, but in the hand of him that uſeth it.

III. A Third pretender to avoid the Shepherds is the *SPIRIT*. That
John 16. 13. without queſtion will lead us into all truth. But for the manner of the *Spirits* leading the *Scripture* points out two ways. The one *Divines* call προφητικῶς, the other may be call'd συνεργετικῶς προφητικῶς *i.e.* as it led the Prophets of old, by revealing to them the truth and matter of the Propheſy, the object. And by this way it led all the Apoſtles, to whom the whole doctrine of the Goſpel, and myſtery of ſalvation by Chriſt was reveal'd. And
2 Pet. 1. 21. thus *holy men of God ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt.* To this way of leading none can pretend, that doth not prove his commiſſion from God by a miracle, who ſends none of ſuch an errand that cannot make it appear

ſome

some way, that he came from him. If the *Enthusiastick* would have his dreams believed to be the dictates and revelations of the Spirit, let him shew his letters of Credence from Heaven seal'd with a miracle, and I shall not doubt to set him above all the Doctors and Shepherds of the Church. Otherwise he may deceive himselfe by his spirit, he shall not deceive me.

The other way of the *Spirits* leading is συνεργετικῶς, *i. e.* not by revealing any thing to us, but by co operating with us, by fortifying the soul & the faculties of it, to all supernatural actions, by assistance of grace to inlighten the understanding to comprehend divine truth, to inflame the affections with the love of it, to support our indeavours in all difficulties and temptations. To this assistance of the Spirit all the faithful have a right. And though in this way the Spirit cannot deceive us, yet we may be deceived in it, because it never works but with us; if we fail in what we are to do, then that fails us.

And

And by this way not only private persons, but publick Councells are governed. To whom the Spirit doth not reveal the matter of their Decrees προφητικῶς, but by way of co-operation assists their indeavours to find out the truth from the proper Topicks of it, the Scripture & Antiquity; for so all the force of their decrees depends upon the reason and grounds upon which they are made. For if any Councel might pretend to that other way of revelation, sure that first famous Apostolical Councel might. *Act.* 15. But that did not otherwise determine the matter in controversy then
Acts 15. 7. πολλῆς συζητήσεως γενομένης, *v.* 7. when there had been much debate and disquisition out of the Scriptures, were the decrees made and sign'd accordingly. *It*
Verse 28. *seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.* The Apostles and Elders were in joynt commission with the Spirit; the same Lord that sent the Spirit, sent the Apostles also, and therefore no contradiction to be led by the Spirit, and by the Shepherds too.

The

IV.

THe fourth and last leader which is brought in to avoid the *Shepherds*, is the CONSCIENCE. This is the *Presbyterians* strongest fort against Obedience. If he can get his Conscience about him, he thinks himself so safe that he may bid defiance to all Authority.

In the Commission of leaders, I confesse, as I said, the Conscience to be of the *Quorum*. We are to do nothing without it, and much lesse against it. But then we must be sure we mistake not somewhat else for the Conscience. Every disease and distemper of the mind, causeless scruple, slight perswasion, groundless fear is not the Conscience, against which we are bound not to act.

The tender *Conscience*, for which so much favour is pleaded, may prove in some no better then a disease of the *Soul*, a spiritual *Splene*. For though it be good to be tender of offending God in any thing where it proceeds from the good temper and constitution of the soul, which is the same constantly in all cases

caſes, and is not affected or taken up for a purpoſe, as the ſturdy begger carries his arm in a ſtring, that it may be a Patent to beg and be idle.

You may know it certainly to be a diſeaſe if it comes upon us by fits and ſtarts, as to be tender of offending God when we obey men, and not to be tender of offending God when we diſobey them. If they be not as tender of one ſide as of another, as I never find them to be, it is but a Paralitick Conſcience that is dead of one ſide. For tell him the Church commands it, he preſently ſhrinks and ſtartles at it; and well ſo, for poſſibly he may ſin againſt God. But tell him on the other ſide that God commands obedience to thoſe that rule over us, it moves him not at all, you may thruſt a needle into his ſide and he feels it not. It ſhewes plainly the Conſcience hath a dead Palſy on that ſide.

But a right and ſound Conſcience againſt which certainly we ought not to act, is a conſtant and well governed judg-

judgement; for not to amuse you as the manner is with frivolous distinctions and definitions of Conscience, in this case the Conscience is nothing but every mans private judgement; for he ought not to attempt the doing of any thing, till he hath framed this judgement to himself, that it is lawful for him to do it. Now seeing our private judgement hath so great power and influence as to interrupt the course of publick, it had need be a true and regular judgement. As first,

I. It must not be arbitrary, for that we think we have reason to decline in the publick Magistrate, to govern by Will and not by Law. Many a Conscience if it were well examined, will prove to be nothing but will, not judgement.

II. Every good judgement is upon a full hearing of the cause of both sides, all evidences duly weighed and examined, then resolves; this is a Conscience against which we ought not to act, though possibly it might prove to be erroneous; yet for all that we must know

that it doth not ſet us free from the guilt of diſobeying our Governours. And then this is all the benefit our Conſcience will do us in caſe of error, that it caſts us into a neceſſity of ſinning, by obeying againſt our ſelves, by diſobeying againſt our Governours. We ſhall do well therefore to take care, that we make not every ſlight perſwaſion, doubt or ſcruple, a Conſcience, truſting to be diſcharged of our obedience by that, which indeed binds it faſter upon us; for that is the very end and benefit for which is inſtituted the Paſtoral charge, that when we are ſo weak we can not ſafely truſt our ſelves, we may rely upon that: unleſs we think it a good plea, I am blind and therefore I will not be led. I am weak and ſickly, and therefore I will not be rul'd by the Phyſitian.

Now to ſumme up all, if not *Reaſon*, nor *Scripture*, nor the *Spirit*, nor *Conſcience* will diſcharge us of the duty we owe to the Church, in the name of God, let us not raſhly fling away ſo great a bleſ-

ſing,

sing, that in all our doubts and fears, for our quiet and security, we may have recourse to the Shepherds and Bishops of our Souls.

THis is the last point, the Shepherds Flock or the Bishops Diocesse: the Souls of men. And here we meet with another quarrel from the *Presbytery*. That they may be sure to spoil the Bishops of all authority, they take away their Diocesse, the cure of Souls, that they may be Bishops *sine titulo*; for Bishops they are not either of our bodies or estates. And why not of our Souls? Christ indeed the great Shepherd that purchased them may rule them, but they are too precious for any other Shepherds to Lord over: which they say is done by binding the Souls with Church-laws and censures, which Christ hath set at liberty. And thus they set up Christ against himself, and Christian liberty against Christian duty.

St. *Paul*, I confess doth earnestly press this point of liberty, *Stand fast in the liberty* Gal. 5. 1.

berty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not intangled again with the yoak of bondage. But what liberty? It is not simply from obedience either to men or Laws, for that were destructive to Humane Society as well as Religion. What then is it? It is no more then that Christians have a liberty not to be Jews. I dare be bold to say, this is all that can be made of it. And the reason why Saint *Paul* did so earnestly press it is evident. The Jews that were willing enough to entertain the doctrine of Christ, yet were not so easily drawn to part with those Rites and Ceremonies, to which they had been so long accustomed, and upon so good authority. To humour those *Simon Magus* and his Disciples set up a medley of both Religions, that they might be *Christ's* Disciples and *Moses* too. Against this doctrine St. *Paul* sets himself, especially in his Epistles to the *Romans* and *Galatians*. If they have taken upon them to be Christians let them end so, and not look back

Gal. 3. 3. again to the flesh having begun in the Spirit.

Spirit. For behold, I Paul *say unto you, if ye be circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing.* To claim from hence liberty from any other men or lawes then the Jews, they might as well say Christ hath here given them liberty not to be Christians. For Christians we cannot be, unless we obey the Lawes and Government of those that Christ hath set over us. To use our liberty in this case our Apostle in the 16. *verse* of this *Chap.* hath adjudged it to be no better then a *cloak of malitiousnesse.* Gal. 5. 2. 1 Pet. 2.

And for those Consciences which are so tender that every Church-law pinches and galls them, they do without reluctance binde their own Souls. Every private man can do that which we will not indure the Church should do. He that promiseth any thing is bound in conscience to perform it, though before he took that bond upon him he had his Christian liberty not to do it. Before *Ananias* promised to sell his estate, and give it to the Church, he was free, St. *Peter* told him so, *Was it not in thine* Acts 5. 4.

own

own power? Yet after that it was not in his power to make use of that liberty; for his conscience was bound. And if a promise may do this, much more a vow or an oath. *If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his Soul,* Numb. 30. 2. (the Soul may be bound) *he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.*

Numb. 30. 2.

If a man should be so unreasonable as to say, his conscience may be bound by himself, but not by any else. Do not they themselves, as their manner is in their Sermons, bind over their hearers to answer for them at the day of judgment? and what a heap and load of Sermons must then ly upon their consciences? though the truth is, they bind none but themselves, and that to repent for corrupting Gods Word, and misleading the people into Faction, Sedition and Disobedience, to say no worse.

Let us serjously consider and compare that which they would avoid, with that which they indeavour to set up in the

room

room of it. They would avoid first the power of the Church in her Laws and Censures as a domineering over mens consciences, and a lording it over Gods inheritance. But if they look upon it with an impartial eye, they shall find all contrary, nothing but moderation; as first in the very stile of the Church, that there might be no harsh words. The laws by which they govern, are not call'd laws but canons, that is, rules to guide, rather then force. 2. Church-punishments are not call'd *pœnæ* but *censuræ*, not that they are sweetned with good words only, but with real benefit; for they are not as temporal punishments *ad vindictam* but *ad disciplinam*, for the amendment, not revenge of sin. 3. The temporal judge, if not Soveraign, cannot pardon the felony though he would. The Ecclesiastical judge cannot but pardon though he would not. *Ecclesia non claudit gremium redeuntibus*, is a rule in the Court Christian. The Church refuseth none that will return and repent. There is no such rule in secular Courts, that

that the thief or murtherer upon repentance may be pardoned. And by Church-Canons in elder times it was deemed an irregularity to be present at a sentence of blood. Not that it is a crime to be so, but as the Canon speaks, *propter defectum lenitatis*, that nothing in them might seem to be of harshness or cruelty. The highest and most terrible of all Church-censures, of which men seem to be most impatient, how harmless and gentle is Excommunication? If he be not guilty, *clavibus errantibus*, he is never the worse for it; the bonds fall off of themselves; if he be guilty, he may be the better for it if he will. When St. *Paul* judged the incestuous *Corinthian* to be delivered unto Satan, and this was thought to be Excommunication & somewhat more; yet this was for his benefit, for *the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus*, verse 5. What is there in all this that should fright us from our obedience?

1 Cor. 1, 3.

Verse 5.

But now let us see what on the other side

side they would set up in the room of this. A liberty of Conscience, forsooth, from the fetters of laws, that they might not serve God in bonds like slaves, but freely. That they may preach what they will, and as long as they will. That they may pray how they will, and fast when they will. That they may stand and kneel where and when they will. Indeed a true arbitrary Will-worship; instead of a lawful orderly serving of God, a confusion of all.

But they hold themselves wrong'd to be charged with will-worship, for that they do all by Reason and the Scripture and the Spirit. Yet for all that pretense they are still under that charge; because all these are at their own wills; what sectary is there that with a wet finger cannot, nay doth not challenge Reason, the Scripture, the Spirit and Conscience to be for him, when he will?

And why do they allow these to guide them and not the Shepherds, but because these are at their beck and will, but the Shepherds are not? And therefore be-

cause they cannot command them, they would be rid of them, that so they might without control Lord it as they will.

But I shall trouble you no longer with our Shepherds or their Adversaries, but for a conclusion and caution reflect upon our selves: for though Christ hath committed the cure of our souls to others, he hath not taken it from ourselves. The Shepherds were given for a help to ease us in it, not to ease us of it. Every one may and must be by a concurrent care a Shepherd and Bishop to himself; and then here I shall take leave only to put you in mind of your Diocese, your Souls,

1 Pet. 4. 15. that ye be not our Apostles ἀλλοτριεπίσκοποι in this Epistle, that we mistake not our Cure; for there be other things we have as great affection for as our Souls, I wish we had not. The rich glutton in the Gospel, when

Luke 12. 19. he said to his soul, *Soul take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for thee*: one sure he mistook his body for his soul, for there was nothing in his barns that could feed that. This is no greater an error and mi-

stake

ſtake then we dayly commit our ſelves, to go no farther then this preſent time. *Lent*, if there were any thing left of it among us but the name, charges the ſoul by prayer and faſting to fit and prepare it ſelf to meet our Lord at the Reſurrection. When we plead our conſtitution and health againſt it, it ſhews we are no ill Curates of our bodies, whatſoever we be of our ſouls.

Yea that which hath a better title to be our ſouls will not lie within this Cure; the intellectual and principal part of the ſoul, and the inriching it with the knowledge of Arts and Sciences, ſpeculative and practick, by which all our affaires, and the greateſt of all the affaines of the world are governed, which imploy the ſouls beſt vertues and indowments, and for which none but great & noble ſoules are fit. Yet this is not the ſoul for which Chriſt died, and is to be our Cure. For when we have gained this and all the world beſides we may loſe our ſouls. The Holy Ghoſt takes no other notice of theſe then as if they were but bodies, and

indeed

indeed for their continuance they are no better, for they perish with our bodies; the greatest wits and wisest conduct lie buried in their dust with them, nor will they appear again for us in that world where the soul is most concern'd. In a word, the Scripture owns no losing or saving to the soul but in that condition which must live and continue for ever. Nothing is worthy that name that is not immortal. Yet I must recal my self when I said these mortal souls, that is, in their temporal condition, are not within our Cure; to get, it may be not, but to use they are. The meanest of them all our Saviour expressly commits to our charge,

Luke 16. 9. *Make you friends of unrighteous Mammon, that they may receive you into everlasting habitations.* Things everlasting are proper for the soul. And if you shall make you friends likewise of your honours, powers, and knowledge, for the advantage of Gods honour and service, certainly they will do as much for you as *Mammon* can. For thus these mortals do put on

1 Cor. 15. 54. immortality, these corruptibles do put on incorruption. You may in this sense make a soul out of your bodies by the chast, sober and temperate use of them. And so our bodies and all else become the proper Cure of our souls, and in the discharge of that care, we may expect the blessing of good Shepherds as well as that of good Sheep. And

1 Pet. 5. 4. *when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of Glory that fadeth not away.*

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